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How Effective Was the Melting Pot? An Analysis of Current Ethnic Differences in the United States

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ABSTRACT

While numerous studies have documented the socioeconomic "cost" of race, few have comprehensively examined the socioeconomic significance of ancestry. This paper uses a new data source to investigate differences in the occupational achievement among a large number of ethnic groups.

The present analysis is based on the November, 1979 CPS, a national sample that provides information on both the ancestry and nativity of the respondent. This is particularly valuable because it permits the identification of first-, second- and third-generation individuals, thereby providing a clearer picture of the process of assimilation. We focus upon the occupational achievements of men 20 to 64 classified by both nativity and ethnicity.

Not surprisingly, there are notable differences in the occupational attainment among foreign-born men. Some of these differences are due to the diverse social and economic backgrounds characteristic of the different nationalities examined, but important differences in the rates of return to background characteristics are also evident. The assimilation perspective predicts that eventually ethnic background will no longer be an important determinant of socioeconomic achievement. By the third generation, we find this to be true for the most part, although there are important exceptions which are discussed in this paper.

How Effective Was the Melting Pot? An Analysis of Current Ethnic Differences in the United States

INTRODUCTION

How does this nation incorporate immigrants who come from differing countries and cultural backgrounds? Do we have a melting pot in which immigrants not only contribute to the nation's culture but are rapidly assimilated so that their occupational achievements are not very different from those of the native-born population? Or is our society still pretty thoroughly divided by race and ethnicity such that some groups are much more successful than others; perhaps because of persistent discrimination and exploitation?

The dominant perspective among sociologists has been based upon the assimilation model developed by Robert Park (Park and Burgess, 1921: Chapters VII, VIII and IX). In explaining the cycle of race relations, he argued that if two or more different groups had to share the same neighborhoods, the same jobs, or the same resources, there would inevitably be competition. This stage would be followed by a period of accommodation and eventually there would be a later final stage: assimilation in which the groups shared a common culture. Presumably, ethnicity would then cease to be an important factor distinguishing the groups.

The American colonies were primarily settled by Anglo-Saxons and for the first quarter of this nation's history, most immigrants came from the British Isles. However, by the late nineteenth century, many immigrants were coming from southern or eastern Europe. These migrants were poorly-educated and took jobs at the bottom of the occupational ladder (Archdeacon, 1983; Handlin, 1951). They faced hostility from the Anglo-Saxon population and from earlier immigrants who feared that their own position would be eroded by the arrival of many new foreigners. However, with time--which is vaguely defined, if at all, by these theorists--the assimilationist model predicts that the ethnic newcomers will reach social and economic parity with the founding Anglo-Saxon group.

SUPPORT FOR THE ASSIMILATIONIST VIEW

The last wave of European immigration ended with passage of the restrictive entry laws of the 1920s. If the assimilation perspective is correct, we should find small ethnic differences in indicators of social and economic achievement. The findings on this point are mixed.

Blau and Duncan (1967:231-241) analyzed data from a national survey conducted by the Census Bureau in 1962. They considered the sons of foreign-born white men and compared them to sons who had native-born parents. Being a second-generation American was little, if any, handicap in terms of educational attainment or occupational achievement. To be sure, second-generation men reported lower educational attainments than the national average but this could be explained by the limited at-

tainments of their own fathers. Looking at who gets what kind of job, that is, the process of occupational mobility, Blau and Duncan found that the sons of foreign-born whites, as a group, were at least as upwardly mobile as the sons of native-born men. They concluded (Blau and Duncan, 1967:240), "Members of white ethnic minorities, in contrast to Negroes, fare as well if not better than the dominant majority."

A subsequent analysis described the occupational achievement of American-born men who had a father born in one of nine specific foreign countries or geographic areas (Duncan and Duncan, 1968). The occupational prestige of second-generation Russians--that is, native-born men with a father born in Russia--was much greater than that of second-generation Italians or Latin Americans. However, such differences were largely attributed to differences in the characteristics of their families of origin. The national origin groups were roughly comparable in converting educational attainment into occupational prestige. The investigators (Duncan and Duncan, 1968:362) argued that the "melting pot" perspective described America because... "Once equated with respect to starting point in the social structure and educational attainment, the occupational achievement of one national-origin group differs little from that of another."

These findings were widely interpreted as proof of the absence of ethnic discrimination. Daniel Bell (1973:416) contended that by the 1960s almost all minorities achieved commensurate status, power and economic rewards--with the exception of women and blacks. The Duncans (1968:363-364) held that there was no evidence of pervasive discrimination on ethnic grounds and that the notion of equal opportunity irrespective of national origin was only challenged by the underachievement of Latin Americans and the overachievement of Russian-Americans.

The findings of Chiswick (1978) are equally persuasive with regard to assimilation of foreigners. Using data from the Census of 1970, he focused attention upon the earnings of native- and foreign-born men. Using a human capital model which took into account a man's educational attainment, his labor force experience, his knowledge of English and his duration of residence in this country, Chiswick found that shortly after their arrival to the U.S., foreign-born men earned much less than comparable native-born men. After five years, for instance, their earnings were 10 percent under those of natives. However, their earnings rose rapidly: after thirteen years, foreign-born men reached earnings parity with the native-born and after 20 years, the earnings of foreign-born men exceeded those of the native-born by six percent. Chiswick (1968:920) concluded

> "... white male immigrants are generally successful in U.S. labor markets. Although initially they have low earnings, their earnings rise rapidly, particularly during their first few years in the country. After 10-15 years, their earnings equal and then exceed those of the native-born."

A variety of other studies suggested that ethnic differences had disappeared in the decade following World War II. For example, Andrew Greeley (1974: Chapter 4) analyzed the attitudes and values of people claiming various ethnic affiliations with regard to political issues, marriage, the family and other personal values. The differences were small and generally inconsistent (Archdeacon, 1983:225-231). There are no national data reporting the ethnic origins of people who marry but studies of trends over time in specific areas suggest great increases in intermarriage in recent decades (Alba, 1976), thereby providing more support for the assimilationist model. The suburbanization of white populations in the post-World War II era presumably eradicated ethnic barriers, encouraged intermarriage and homogenized values.

THE CHALLENGE TO THE ASSIMILATIONIST VIEW

Although many findings convincingly uphold the assimilationist view, a flurry of writings in the 1960s and 1970s challenged it and argued that large ethnic differences remained fifty or more years after the last wave of immigrants arrived from Europe. Glazer and Moynihan (1964:x, cvii), for instance, in describing New York City, argued that the most amazing point about the melting pot is that it never occurred. In their view, ethnic conflict over neighborhoods, jobs, and political power was as great in the 1960s as in the early twentieth century. Novak (1972) believed that scholars were quite likely to overlook persistent ethnic differences since such differences conflict with the assimilation model of the sociologists and with the free market model of economists.

A different perspective argued that there was a ethnic revival in the 1960s as groups became aware of their origins and the differences which distinguished them from Anglo-Saxons. Greeley (1974:284-289) speculated that a renewed interest in one's ethnic origin was, in part, a reaction to the civil rights efforts of blacks, Hispanics and American Indians. That is, as governmental agencies and courts approved affirmative action programs and a War on Poverty to aid blacks, provided support for Spanish-language programs in schools, and honored long-forgotten treaties with American Indians, white ethnic groups found it in their interest to stress their identities lest they lose in the competition with other groups (Glazer, 1975:73-76).

Findings from a new series of studies bolstered the view that ethnicity was an important axis of differentiation. If first-generation immigrants earn as much as native-born men, as reported by Chiswick, and if second-generation men were as occupationally mobile as the sons of native-born parents, as reported by Blau and Duncan, then there is good reason to think that the assimilationist view is accurate. The findings, however, did not support this expectation.

Using a series of National Opinion Research Center (NORC) studies, Greeley (1974: Chapter 3) divided samples of the population--most of them native-born--into fifteen religious-ethnic groups. Irish and Germans, for instance, were classified as either Catholic or Protestant while Jews and blacks were considered distinct ethnicities. He found

substantial differences in the achievements of these groups in the mid-1970s. Jews, Irish Catholics and British Protestants had unusually extensive educational attainments, while blacks and Spanish-speaking Catholics were distinctive because of their limited educations. He examined earnings, taking into account differences in place of residence and educational attainment. Jews, German Catholics and Irish Catholics were uniquely successful in earning large amounts, given their educational background; while Irish Protestants, Spanish-speaking Catholics and blacks earned relatively little. Although tests of significance were not reported, the findings revealed large ethnic differences in education, earnings and occupation.

In 1973, the Bureau of the Census repeated the queries which had been asked in the Blau-Duncan study of occupational mobility a decade earlier. A new question asked adult men to identify their origin or descent. Thus, this study, similar to those conducted by Greeley, allowed an analyst to distinguish ethnic groups who had been in the United States for three or more generations.

Featherman and Hauser (1978: Chapter 8) found substantial differences among ethnic groups. Several stood out because of their extensive educational attainment after controlling for their father's education, his occupational prestige and the number of generations their family had lived in the United States. These were men claiming Asian (Chinese or Japanese) origins or Russian origins. At the other extreme, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans had exceptionally low educational attainments once relevant factors were controlled.

The investigators next examined the independent effects of national origin upon occupational achievement net of a man's family of origin, his own educational attainment and the number of generations in the United States. Men of Russian or English origin were most successful in obtaining prestigious jobs while, once again, men of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin had the least success in occupational competition.

Finally these researchers investigated ethnic differences in earnings. A man's earnings in 1972 was assumed to be influenced by characteristics of his family of origin, his own education and occupation, the number of generations in the United States, and his national origin. Taking these explanatory factors into account, Featherman and Hauser found that Russians and Poles were extraordinarily successful in acquiring high earnings. The net effect of a Russian origin was to add about $1,300 to the average income of about $9,000. The unsuccessful groups were somewhat surprising. Mexican and Puerto Rican men reported low earnings but the groups furthest behind were Canadians--a net cost of $1,200--and Asians (Chinese or Japanese) with a net cost of $2,100 (Featherman and Hauser, 1974).

EXPLANATIONS FOR ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

For many decades, social scientists stressed the assimilationist view and argued that ethnic differences would inevitably disappear in modern industrialized societies. The apparent ethnic revival and the

findings which challenged this view led social theorists to develop explanations for the persistence or reappearance of ethnicity. These may be grouped into three categories. First, there is the view that dominant groups exploit weaker minorities, who are often recent immigrants or are isolated regional groups. If an ethnic or racial group is poorly treated in one generation and denied access to the means of mobility, this may have lasting effects. Indeed, it may contribute to stereotypes which hinder mobility for many generations. Hechter (1975) proposed a model of internal colonialism whereby a regional minority is economically exploited by a dominant group, a model which may help explain the limited achievements of blacks, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Bonacich (1972) developed a split labor market model which contends that a dominant group--through both managerial decisions and union leadership--reserves the better jobs for themselves while assigning those jobs with little pay and no advancement to minorities.

A second set of explanations borrows heavily from ecological theory and focuses upon the size of an ethnic group and the specific conditions they face when they enter a society. Williams argues that "... dispersion of minorities. . .tends to diffuse hostility and, in the long run, reduce it (Williams, 1974:76).

Small size also allows ethnic groups to carve out special economic niches for themselves and to be more easily absorbed by their native-born counterparts (Blalock, 1982:55-57). Rapid growth is likely to upset this balance since it may increase hostility toward a minority. That is, the majority may feel they are being overwhelmed by a limitless tide of newcomers who will take their jobs. The legislation which prohibited Asian immigration to the United States at the turn of this century and that which restricted the flow from eastern and southern Europe in 1924, may have eased the assimilation of these groups since, when the flood became a trickle, anti-immigrant hysteria was greatly reduced (Lieberson, 1980: Chapter 12).

A third set of explanations for the achievements or failures of ethnic groups stresses their presumably enduring cultural values. Some groups, it is argued, came to the United States with beliefs and habits which guaranteed them upward mobility while others lacked such traits. The success of Jews and the Japanese is frequently attributed to their values. Jews who migrated to the United States were, it is argued, thrifty, ambitious, desired education and often deferred immediate gratification for the sake of long-term goals (Gordon, 1964:185). The Japanese--despite facing extreme racial hostility and incarceration during World War II--achieved in the United States because of their diligence, their honesty and their appreciation for education (Petersen, 1971:5; Caudill and DeVos, 1956). (For a rebuttal of this view, see: Bonacich and Modell, 1980 or Steinberg, 1981).

Thomas Sowell is one of the few social scientists who stress the incompatibility of the cultural values of groups other than American Indians. For example, he argues that the achievement of the Irish was limited for decades because of their tendency to drink too much and brawl too frequently. Native-born blacks, he suggests, are far too willing to accept government transfer payments rather than work, bear

too many children and fail to maintain the stable two-parent families which are needed if children are to be upwardly mobile (Sowell, 1981a: Chapters 2 and 8; 1981b: Chapter 1).

NEW DATA TO TEST PERSISTING QUESTIONS

Are there ethnic differences in achievement in the United States? Does the Anglo-Saxon population still have an advantage on indicators of success? Or, do we have a melting pot such that ethnic differences are small or even nonexistent? An investigator who examines empirical findings from the last two decades will discover strong support both for and against the melting pot view. In addition, convincing theoretical arguments can be marshalled on both sides of this issue. Fortunately, there is a new body of data which allows us to resolve important questions about the assimilation process.

Discrepant findings result, in part, from data-gathering problems. One difficulty is the absence of a religion question in many surveys. If an analyst wishes to identify Jews or separate Irish-Protestants from Irish-Catholics, he or she must rely upon NORC data but these provide small samples and almost all respondents are in the third or higher generations. Another problem is the wide array of ethnic groups, many of which are small in size. If a person is interested in the achievements of Armenians, Ruthenians or Alsatians, even a large sample will include few cases. The major challenge, however, is identifying who belongs to which group; that is, the question of defining ethnicity.

From 1880 through 1970, decennial censuses asked respondents their own birthplace and that of their parents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973). This identified first-generation immigrants and their American-born sons and daughters: second-generation Americans. Many of the studies showing an absence of ethnic differences either compare the second-generation population to the third-generation or they compare different second-generation groups to each other.

This approach is severely limited in two significant ways. First, it assumes that the country of a parent's birth is a good indicator of an individual's own ethnicity. As Lieberson and Santi (1983) demonstrate, this is frequently not a reasonable assumption. Second, use of these data provides no information about the ethnicity of an American-born individual whose parents were also born in the United States. It is impossible to determine whether third-generation Irish or Germans have "caught up" with those of English origin if you are restricted to these sources.

In the 1960s, the Census Bureau and NORC experimented with questions which asked all adults their national origin or heritage. In some circumstances, respondents were presented with a checklist and in others, open-ended questions were used (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974; Greeley, 1974:35-46; Featherman and Hauser, 1978). There are numerous difficulties in doing this since a list seems to force a respondent into a narrow range of choices. However, open-ended questions are not only troublesome to code but they also elicit numerous confusing and unclas-

sifiable responses. Approximately 10 percent of the population claims not to know their origins while another 10 to 15 percent persist in calling themselves Americans even when prodded about their origin (Smith, 1980; Alba and Chamlin, 1983).

Because of the need for data about third and higher generation Americans and because of the declining representation of the second generation, the Census Bureau omitted the question about birthplace of parents from the Census of 1980 and replaced it with an ancestry question. A one-in-five sample was asked the open-ended question, "What is this person's ancestry?"

In preparation for the decennial enumeration, the Bureau of the Census, in November, 1979, asked a large national sample all the birthplace, ancestry and language questions which appeared on either the Census of 1970 or 1980. This is an important new data source for three reasons. First, information about ancestry or nationality is available for the entire population. For example, instead of assuming that the French population consists of all persons born in France or with a parent born in France, we can select all people who claim French as their ancestry regardless of their place of birth or number of generations in the United States. Second, for the first time, we can investigate the achievements of ancestry groups classified by generation. For example, the educational attainment and occupational prestige of people born in Mexico may be compared to that of third and higher generation Americans who also claim Mexican ancestry. Third, the sample size, approximately 170,000, is sufficiently large to both classify immigrant groups by generation and to identify the characteristics of newly-arriving groups.[1]

The nature of the data we will use to investigate assimilation is illustrated in Figure 1 which shows the ancestry composition of the population in 1979. Data are presented for all groups reported by one million or more (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982: Table 1). Several coding procedures merit attention since they influence the estimated size of these ancestries. Because an open-ended question was used in 1979 and in the 1980 Census, a respondent could list any number of origins. In general, the first two were coded unless one of them was American. That is, a person who gave Portuguese-American was coded as Portuguese only. On the basis of previous studies, the Census Bureau found that 17 sets of triple ancestries were commonly reported. In these cases, all responses were coded. That is, a person reporting German-Irish-Scottish origin would be counted once in each of these ancestries but a person claiming Polish-Chinese-Jamaican would be counted in only the first two.

The 1979 data were collected by interviewers and a respondent who gave American or United States was prodded for a different answer. If the person persisted in saying American--and 6 percent of the respondents did--that answer was coded. No ancestry report was obtained from 11 percent of the sample, either because they did not know their origin or because they refused to answer this voluntary question. Religious

responses were not coded. A person, for example, who said they were a French-Jew was classified as French only.

The ancestry question should not be confused with the race question. The majority of the nation's 26 million blacks reported their ancestry was Afro-American and the ancestry counts for the Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese populations in November, 1979 are comparable to the census counts for these racial groups in 1980.[2] A major discrepancy concerns the American Indian population since there were about nine million people who classified themselves as white by race but Indian by ancestry. That is, 9.9 million respondents in the November, 1979 survey gave their ancestry as American Indian but the Census of 1970 found only 800,000 people who claimed Indian as their race and, in the Census of 1980, there were only 1.4 million who answered Indian to the race question (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982: Tables 1 and 9; 1983: Table 40).

[Figure 1]

Figure 1 reports that just under one-quarter of the total population of 216 million claimed German ancestry while about one-fifth reported that their origin was Irish or English. The next largest ancestry groups--Afro-American, Scottish and French--were much smaller since they were about one-third the size of the largest ancestries. Italian is the only other origin claimed by more than ten million and only four other groups--American Indians, Polish, Dutch and Mexican--were reported by more than five million.

For each ancestry, we indicate what proportion of responses were given singly and what proportion were given in combination with other ancestries. Overall, about six out of ten who answered this question gave only one response while the rest gave multiple ancestries. Among white groups, the proportion with multiple reports is roughly proportional to their duration of residence in this country, undoubtedly a consequence of ethnic intermarriage. Only 22 percent of those asserting Irish ancestry and 28 percent of those claiming English gave a single response. At the other extreme, 88 percent of the Mexican origin and 87 percent of the Iranians (data not shown in Figure 1) reported only one ancestry (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982: Table 1).

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES AMONG FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS

To study assimilation, we looked at the characteristics of men 20 to 64 in 1979. We wished to know whether those in the core cultural group--men of English ancestry--enjoyed an advantage in socioeconomic status and attainment. We analyzed data for three generations: those men who were born abroad (first-generation immigrants), those who were born in the United States but had one or both parents born abroad (second generation) and those born in the United States of U.S.-born parents (third and higher generations).

Within every generation, men from each ancestry group are compared to men of English origin on several measures of status. Two pertain to education: average school years completed and the proportion who finished at least one year of college. We did not examine college graduates since this age group includes men in their twenties.

We wished to analyze ethnic differences in earnings; however, the requisite data are not available. The November Current Population Survey asks only one income question and that involved the total income of the entire household. To describe economic differences among these groups, we determined per capita household income.[3] These amounts reveal large differences in the prosperity of the groups but they are influenced by ethnic differences in both income and family size.

The fourth measure of achievement is the average socioeconomic occupational score for a group. The Census Bureau's survey reported the detailed occupation of every employed man and the usual job for those who were out of work. A score was assigned using the scale developed by Duncan (1961; Blau and Duncan, 1967:118-120; Hauser and Featherman, 1978: Chapters 1 and 2) and updated by Featherman, Sobel and Dickens (1975). These range from a high of 96 assigned to dentists to a low of 3 for mine equipment operatives. For the entire sample, the average socioeconomic scores are 35 for men in the first generation, 42 for the second and 39 for the third and higher.

One component of this investigation will determine whether the educational attainment, occupational achievements and per capita income of various ancestries equal those of the core group--the English. However, we wanted to go beyond this comparison. Do men of English origin have an advantage in converting their educational attainment into prestigious jobs or do all groups have similar rates of occupational achievement? If there is discrimination in the labor market such that Anglo-Saxons are favored for the best jobs, or if some groups have cultural values which enhance their achievement, we should find significant ethnic differences in the rate at which ancestries convert educational attainment into occupational prestige. If there are no such ethnic differences, we will have strong support for the assimilation hypothesis.

To test this, the socioeconomic occupational index was regressed upon years of education and a series of control variables which influence achievement. These are the man's age, his marital status--a dichotomous variable which distinguished married-spouse-present men from others, region of residence--South or non-South, and language. For the first generation, this is a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the man reported he spoke English well while for the second and third generations, language is measured by a variable which distinguished men with a non-English mother tongue from those whose mother tongue was English.

Even though this is a large sample, we had to group some ancestries. Our aim was to create groups which were homogeneous with regard to cultural and geographic origin and would include a total sample size (uninflated) of 50 or more men 20 to 64.[4] There was no

problem in dealing with such groups as Italians and Germans but we had to form other groups such as "other southern Europeans"--primarily Greeks and Portuguese--and "Caribbeans"--primarily Jamaicans and Haitians. Some ancestries appear in one generation but not in others. Filipinos, for example, are sufficiently numerous to be included in the first generation but not the third while older immigrant groups such as Dutch and Afro-American are chiefly in the third generation. For the majority of respondents, there was no problem in assigning ancestry since they reported only one. However, 38 percent gave two or more ancestries (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982: Table A). The frequency of such multiple reporting varied by generation: 92 percent of the foreign-born reported only one ancestry; 84 percent for the second and 61 percent for third and higher generations. People who listed multiple ancestries were classified by their first report. A man, for example, who listed Norwegian-Japanese was treated as Norwegian.

Table 1 provides information about that 5 percent of the population which was foreign-born.[5] Data are shown for the English ancestry group and for the thirteen other ancestries which were sufficiently large. The English completed an average of 13.2 years of schooling and 43 percent finished one or more years of college. Their educational attainment exceeded that of most other groups. Asians, Filipinos and men from northwest Europe have greater attainments but the only significant difference involved the college education of Asians and Filipinos. At the other end, several foreign-born groups reported significantly less attainment than the English, including Italians, other southern Europeans, Caribbeans and the Hispanic groups. These educational differences are, in part, the outcome of migration selectivity. Two of the easiest ways to legally migrate to the United States are to have relatives here or to have a skill--often a profession--which is in short supply. The criteria used for admission vary by country and this helps explain the educational differences shown in Table 1. For example, licensing procedures facilitate the entry of Filipino professionals.

[Table 1]

Turning to occupational status, we see that no groups exceed the English. Men from several ancestries including Italians, Caribbeans and the Hispanic groups work at significantly less prestigious jobs. This corroborates findings from the 1973 Occupational Change in a Generation (OCG) study which reported that foreign-born men from England held unusually prestigious jobs while those from Mexico were at the bottom of the distribution (Featherman and Hauser, 1978: Table 8.1).

The income data show that the English-origin group has a favorable economic status. No foreign-born group has an income exceeding that of men from the British Isles but many are significantly poorer. First-generation Mexicans report exceptionally low incomes: less than 30 percent those of the English.

We next considered the rate at which ancestry groups convert their educations into occupational achievement. We tested to determine if there were a common rate of return for all groups and rejected that hypothesis. As a result, we used a covariance model which allowed the rates of return to vary from one group to another.

For English men, each additional year of schooling netted a man 4.5 socioeconomic index points.[6] Remaining in school three additional years--according to this model--leads to an increment of 14 points for an English migrant or the difference between an auto mechanic and a bookkeeper. No ancestry has a significantly greater rate of return for their investments than the English but two groups--other southern Europeans and Mexicans--do significantly less well. These findings are quite consistent with those of Chiswick (1979) concerning the achievements of the foreign-born. Various ancestries differ from the English in their educational attainment and their jobs but when they enter the labor market, most groups are not at a disadvantage--vis-a-vis the core group--in converting their educations into occupational achievement.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES AMONG SECOND-GENERATION MEN

Data for American-born sons of foreign or mixed parentage are shown in Table 2. Because the second generation is larger than the first--11 percent of the population was second generation in 1979--more ancestries are represented, including Scandinavians, Poles and French (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982: Table 3).

[Table 2]

There are differences in educational attainment among the second generation: the English are extensively educated compared to others. Only Russians exceed them in attainment but the difference is not significant. Many ethnicities--including several old stock groups--report significantly lower attainments than the English. Second-generation Mexicans are distinctive because of their limited attainment; they average almost four fewer years of school attendance than the English.

With regard to occupational status, men of English origin are also in a favorable position since no other group has a significantly greater achievement. Several ancestries are significantly lower in occupational status. They represent a variety of different origins: Germans and the Irish from northern Europe, Italians from the South, Poles from eastern Europe, Asians and the two Hispanic groups. Both the 1962 and 1973 (OCG) studies investigated the occupational prestige of second-generation men. The findings reported here are comparable to those of earlier studies in showing that the English and Russians are high in status while Mexicans are uniquely low (Featherman and Hauser, 1978: Tables 8.8 and 8.10; Duncan, Featherman and Duncan, 1972: Table 4.1).

Economic differences among the second generation are smaller than among the first. The English are prosperous but their per capita income is exceeded by that of Russians and the other western Europe group--primarily Dutch and Belgians. Three second-generation ancestries were significantly poorer than the English with Mexicans at the bottom of this financial ranking.

Although second-generation men from English origins have an occupational advantage over other ancestries, there is little evidence that they are more effective in converting their educational attainment into occupational status. Table 2 shows the occupational returns for investments in education using a model similar to that described for the first generation.[7] An additional year of education nets English men 5.5 points on the occupational scale. No group has a significantly greater rate of return. Indeed, the coefficients for almost all ancestries are slightly lower than that for the English but only two groups--Mexicans and the Lithuanian-Latvian-Ukranian combination--have significantly lower rates of return. This provides support for the assimilation view since most second-generation ancestries are not at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the English.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES AMONG THIRD-GENERATION MEN

The term third generation is used to describe American-born sons of parents who were both born in the United States. Of course, this includes many higher generations since the forebears of some of these men arrived in the colonies in the 1600s. Table 3 presents information about third-generation men.

[Table 3]

Before examining differences within the third generation, it is appropriate to compare the characteristics of different generations. The stereotypical view is that when migrants come to the United States, they have limited educational attainments and work at low-status jobs. Their sons might complete more years of schooling and thereby improve their employment prospects, a process of upward mobility which continues into the third generation. Since we are examining cross-sectional data, we cannot test this hypothesis but it is clear that this three-generational pattern describes only a few groups. For Russian and Mexican men, there was a progression of status with the generations but first-generation Germans were more extensively educated and worked at higher-status occupations than the second or third generation. Second-generation Irish were similarly in an advantaged position compared to third-generation Irish. Immigration regulations help to account for the high status of some first-generation groups. The relatively great occupational achievement of second-generation men has been noted previously but there is no consensus about why it occurs (Blau and Duncan, 1967:233; Featherman and Hauser, 1978:439).

Returning to the investigation of assimilation, we find that several ancestries report greater educational attainment than the English: Scotch/Welsh, Russians, Lithuanians/Latvians/Ukranians and Asians. An array of third-generation ancestries completed fewer years of schooling than the English, including several old stock groups, the Hispanic ancestries and two which are racial minorities: American Indians and Afro-Americans. Looking at occupational rankings, we find three groups--the Scotch/Welsh, Russians and the east Europeans--work at significantly higher-status jobs than the English while many groups have average occupational indexes lower than those of men claiming English ancestry.

Per capita income in third-generation households varies widely. Russians and Asians report significantly larger incomes than the English. The richest groups--the Asians--have per capita incomes about 40 percent in excess of those of the English. On the other hand, many ancestries live in households which are significantly poorer than the English including such old stock groups as the French, Germans and Irish. Ancestries with the lowest per capita incomes are Americans, Indians, Afro-Americans and, at the very bottom, Mexicans who have incomes only 60 percent those of the English.

To determine whether membership in a particular ancestry was an advantage or a liability for occupational achievement, we once again looked at the returns for investments in education. Presumably, if employers prefer members of one ancestry of if some groups have cultural values which give them an edge, we will find differences in the rate at which education is converted into occupational status.

Table 3 reports that an additional four years of schooling nets a third-generation Englishman 21 occupational points. Several ancestries get greater returns for their investments in education. An identical amount of schooling nets an Asian 30 points, a Russian, 28 points and other east Europeans, 26 points. The ancestries at a disadvantage are American Indians and Mexicans who derive only 14 occupational points from four additional years of schooling. Those who claimed Afro-American or American as their ethnic origin were also significantly behind the English.

The hypothesis that ancestry has no significant effect on occupational attainment should be rejected. However, most of the European-origin groups achieve at about the same rate as the English. There is no evidence that Poles, the Irish, Italians or Scandinavians are at a disadvantage in the competition for good jobs. Consistent with previous studies, we find that Russians are unusually successful (Duncan and Duncan, 1968: Table 3; Duncan, Featherman and Duncan, 1972: Table 4.1). There is consensus that this group is largely Jewish rather than Orthodox (Lieberson, 1980:12; Duncan and Lieberson, 1959:373), a conclusion drawn from the Census of 1910 which found that 96 percent of the first- and second-generation Russians had Hebrew or Yiddish as their mother tongue (Rosenthal, 1975:279; Carpenter, 1927;111-112). Third-generation Asians, however, are even more successful than Russians in converting their educations into prestigious jobs. The groups at a disadvantage are the descendents of those who have traditionally ex-

perienced hostile treatment: Mexicans, Indians and blacks. We stress once again that ancestral and racial identities overlap but are not the same. No more than two-thirds of the nation's blacks gave Afro-American as their ancestry while the number who reported Indian as their ancestry is almost five times the number who reported Indian as their race.

Those who claim American ancestry are distinctively low in educational attainment, occupational status and their returns for investment in schooling are significantly smaller than those of the English. These people differ from others since they had to persist in saying American after being prodded for some other response. Relative to the other ancestries, they are highly concentrated in the South and about one-quarter of them are black. (For a discussion of those people unable to provide an ethnic identity, see: Smith, 1980:88-90).

AN INTERGENERATIONAL COMPARISON OF OCCUPATIONAL RETURNS TO EDUCATION

The assimilation model contends that immigrants become similar to the core cultural group the longer they remain in the United States. Presumably, a first-generation migrant is at a disadvantage because he lacks information about the labor market, because he cannot speak English well or, perhaps, because of discrimination. If assimilation occurs, we would expect ancestries to become more similar to the English as the number of generations in the United States increases.

Ideally, this hypothesis would be tested with longitudinal data covering several generations and many decades. Such data are not available but with this unique data set, we can see if ethnic differences in occupational achievement disappear by the third generation, controlling for differences in age, region, marital status, English language ability and education.

There are ten ancestry groups for which sufficient data are available to allow us to compare occupational achievement in three generations. Their occupational returns for educational attainment are shown in Table 4. They are listed in order of achievement in the first generation.

[Table 4]

Several conclusions may be drawn from these data. Occupational returns for educational attainment typically increase with the number of generations in the United States. For eight of the groups, they go up from the first to the second and also from the second to the third generation.

The ranking of ancestries according to returns to schooling is fairly stable from the first generation to the second (a rho of .62) but less so from the second to the third generation (a rho of .54). Comparing the first and third generations reveals that Asians are especially effective in converting education into occupational status while

Mexicans are unsuccessful. However, the value for the rho comparing the first and third generations, .53, leads to rejection of the hypothesis that the rank ordering is the same in the first and third generations. In particular, when the analysis is restricted to the European-origin ancestries, we find that their relative position in one generation is not a good predictor of their position in a later generation.

We lack the longitudinal data needed to investigate whether ancestries differ in the way they transmit their advantages or liabilities from one generation to the next. However, findings from these cross-sectional data provide strong support for the assimilation model, at least for European groups. First-generation migrants might be at a handicap in the occupational achievement process but this is apparently not passed on to their grandsons.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Studies of ethnic differences have relied upon census questions which identify first-generation migrants and their offspring. The query about birthplace of parents was deleted from the Census of 1980 and replaced with an open-ended question about ancestry. The November, 1979 Current Population Survey asked those questions about birthplace, language or ancestry used in either the 1970 or the 1980 Census. It provides a unique data set which allows us, for the first time, to study the social and economic status of three distinct generations of the same ethnic group. On the basis of these data, as well as other sources, five conclusions may be drawn about migrants, ethnicity and achievement in the United States.

First, immigrants and their children are not at a great disadvantage in social or economic status. The selectivity of immigration helps to account for the high status of first-generation migrants but second-generation migrants differ only a little from third and higher generations in educational attainment, occupational status or per capita household income. Indeed, for several ethnic groups, the status of second-generation immigrants exceeds that of higher generations. As the 1962 and 1973 OCG studies demonstrated, if you wish to account for achievement in the United States, you cannot get very far using generation as a variable (Featherman and Hauser, 1978:436-438; Blau and Duncan, 1967:235-241). During the 1960s and 1970s, first- and second-generation immigrants--as a group--apparently did not experience discrimination when it came to getting an education or a job.

Second, there are significant ethnic differences in education, occupational rankings and income in all generations. Even if you consider old stock groups who have been in the United States since the nineteenth century, you find that some are higher in status than others. In most comparisons, the educational attainment, occupational standing and economic status of the core cultural group--the English--exceeds that of most other ethnicities. The ancestries not only differ from the English but from one another. Third and higher generation Afro-American men complete three and one-half fewer years of schooling than Russians. The

per capita income in third-generation Mexican households is less than half that in Asian households.

Third, in the process of occupational achievement, European-origin groups are not at a disadvantage compared to those of English ancestry. Many ancestries spend fewer years in school than the English but in the competition for prestigious jobs, these groups are not significantly disadvantaged. This corroborates findings from the OCG studies which showed that ethnic origin had a limited independent impact upon a man's occupational achievement (Featherman and Hauser, 1978: Tables 8.8 and 8.10; Duncan, Featherman and Duncan, 1972: Table 4.1).

Fourth, several groups stand out for their low levels of achievement in the third generation: Mexicans, Afro-Americans and American Indians. The limited achievements of Hispanics have been noted by many investigators (Chiswick, 1978:921; Duncan and Duncan, 1968:364; Poston, Alvirez and Tienda, 1976; Poston and Alvirez, 1973). Third-generation Mexicans were the least effective of any group--even less effective than Afro-Americans--in translating their educational attainment into occupational prestige. (For similar findings from the 1973 OCG, see: Featherman and Hauser, 1978: Table 8.16). Numerous investigations of racial differences report that blacks are not very successful in converting their education into occupational prestige and this undoubtedly explains the low returns shown for Afro-Americans and helps to explain that for Americans (Seigel, 1965; Duncan, 1968; Hauser and Featherman, 1977:133-136). Even though we are describing an unusual group of American Indians, since most of them claim this as their ancestry but not their race, we find that they are at a significant disadvantage in the attainment process since their rates of return for education are close to those of Mexicans or Afro-Americans, not to those of European-origin ancestries.

Fifth, at least in the third generation, Russians and east Europeans are significantly more successful than the English in attaining prestigious jobs. The Asians are also a very successful group in all generations. There is now a popular image of Asians in the United States as highly-educated and financially successful but this must be influenced by the selectivity of recent migration. When we turn to those Asians whose forebears arrived in the United States before World War I, we find that Asians are very successful in the occupational achievement process even more so than the descendents of Russians who arrived at a similar time.

Is the United States a melting pot? If melting pot means that third generation and higher ethnic groups will be indistinguishable with regard to educational attainment, occupational prestige or economic prosperity; the answer is definitely not. Even when the analysis is restricted to European-origin groups, we find significant differences in the indicators of status. On the other hand, if a melting pot means that ethnic groups are neither favored nor at a disadvantage in converting their educational attainment into occupational prestige, then there is strong evidence to support the theory. Among European-origin ancestries, only Russians and east Europeans are significantly different from the English and they are more successful.

Third-generation groups differ in their characteristics and several have distinctively low or high rates of occupational returns for investments in education. Such differences may come about for three reasons. First, the unusually great achievements of Asians, Russians and eastern Europeans are consistent with the hypothesis that these groups have a cultural advantage over others. It is possible--but not certain--that the great grandparents of the Russians and Asians who were interviewed in 1979 came to the United States with distinctive values which were protected and carefully transmitted through the generations. Presumably, as the acculturation process continues, intermarriage may occur and the distinctiveness of these values may be lost.

Second, ecological factors, rather than cultural ones, may account for the superior achievements of some ancestries. As Lieberson (1980: Chapter 12) argues, some groups entered the United States, found favorable economic niches and then benefited from a cessation of immigration from the country of origin. Alba (1984:117) explains the rapid economic mobility of Italian migrants in terms of another ecological factor: their geographic location. Although poorly-educated and impoverished when they arrived in the United States, they settled in and around the prosperous and economically-expanding cities of the Northeast and rapidly caught up with other ethnic groups.

Third, ethnicities may differ because discrimination limits the achievements of some while favoritism enhances that of others. Employers may frequently discount the educational credentials of Mexicans, Afro-Americans or American Indians and assume they will be unproductive workers. Asians, Russians and men from other ethnicities may now be seen as exceptionally talented and diligent. Further analysis of data from the 1979 Current Population Survey and the Census of 1980 will allow us to select among these explanations for ethnic differences in the achievement process.

FOOTNOTES

1. In contrast, the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, which includes an ethnic origin question, has interviewed about 4,000 respondents annually or bi-annually.

2. For Asian groups, counts from the November, 1979 ancestry question and the April, 1980 Census question are shown below:

Group	1979 Ancestry Count (000)	1980 Racial Count (000)
Asian Indians	182	387
Chinese	705	812
Filipino	764	782
Japanese	680	716
Korean	265	357
Vietnamese	198	245

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 116, Table 1; Census of Population: 1980, PC80-81-12, Table 1.

3. If the head or co-head of a household reported a given ancestry, we used information about that household's total income and its size to determine per capita income.

4. An effort was made to study the occupational achievements of women classified by ancestry and generation. However, the small number of employed women severely limited this analysis.

5. These groups are classified on the basis of reported ancestry and whether or not the person was born in the United States. The sample was too small to allow a simultaneous tabulation of ancestry and country of birth. We could not, for example, distinguish Germans born in Austria from those born in Switzerland. We considered a classification of ancestry by race but found that there was little racial variance within ancestries except for the Caribbean category. For the first generation, we treated Puerto Ricans as if they were foreign-born. Of course, all persons in Puerto Rico are native-born American citizens.

6. Ancestry groups differ in the proportion of their schooling which was at the pre-college or college level. We feared that using one variable to measure educational attainment might distort the occupational returns associated with schooling. That is, groups might receive similar returns for pre-college education and for years of college but differ in their distribution across these categories. If only one educational variable were used, the coefficients would be influenced by distributional differences. To test this, we fitted models which

used two educational variables distinguishing elementary and secondary education from college. The models provided substantive findings and estimates of explained variance which were similar to those of the simpler model.

7. Once again, we tested to determine if a model with a common slope and a common intercept fit these data. We determined that it did not so we used the covariance model which allows rates of return to vary by ancestry.

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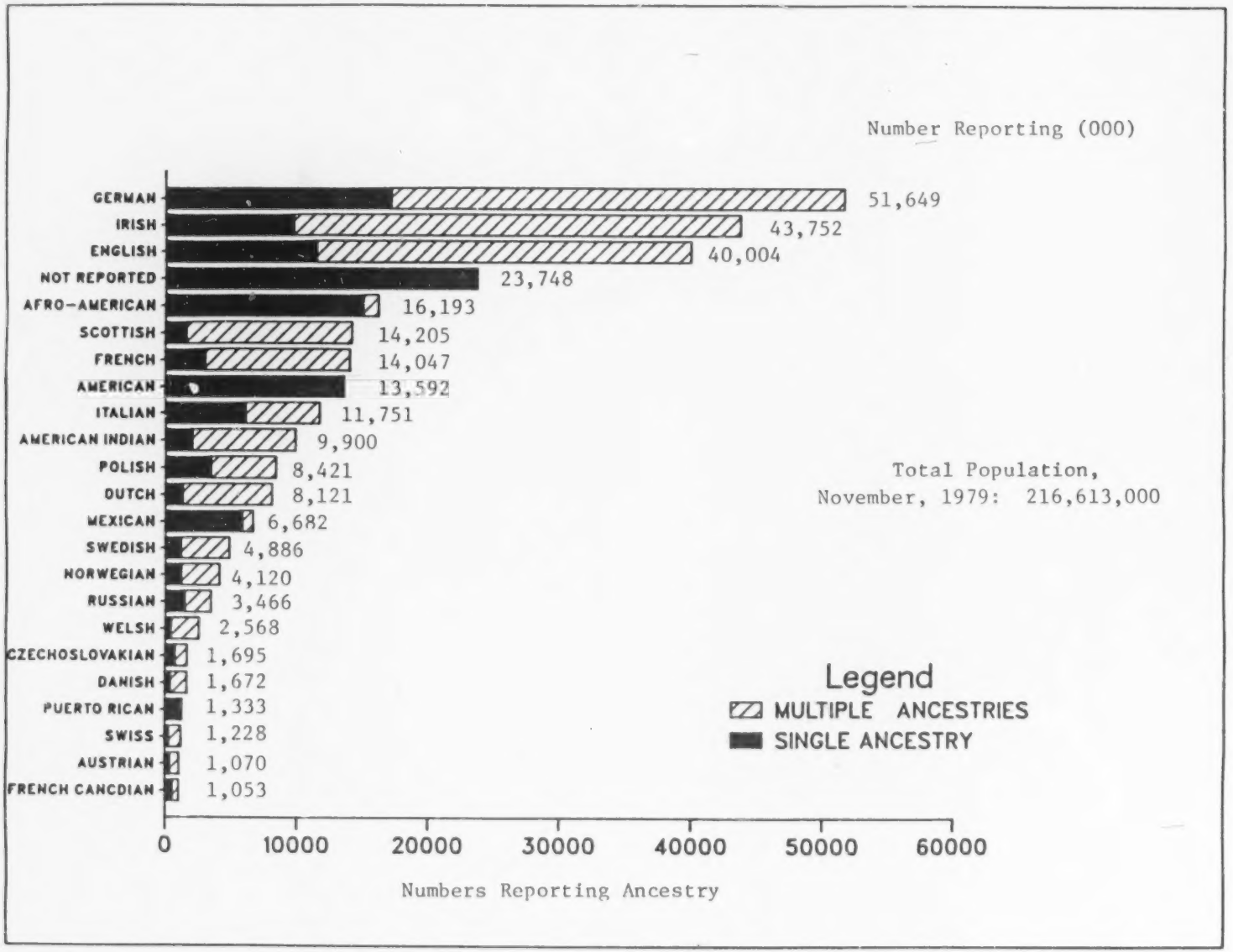
FIGURE 1. Ancestries Reported by One Million or More Persons, November, 1979



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 116.

TABLE 1. Foreign-Born Men 20 to 64 Classified by Ancestry; Educational and Occupational Characteristics and Occupational Returns for Educational Attainment

Ancestry	Sample Size	Characteristics of Groups: Mean Years of School	Characteristics of Groups: % With Some College	Characteristics of Groups: Mean Occupational Score	Regression Analysis: R^2	Regression Analysis: Returns for Education[a] b	Regression Analysis: Returns for Education[a] S.E. of b.
Total Sample	2,101	11.4	36%	36	41%	3.2	0.1
English	74	13.2	42	50	41	4.6	0.8
British Isles, Not English	73	13.5	51	47	34	4.4	0.8
German	94	13.1	48	43	28	4.1	0.8
Other N.W. Europe	97	13.1	48	44	52	5.6	0.6
Italian	111	10.0**	15**	33**	29	2.8	0.5
Other South Europe	86	10.1**	15**	28**	29	1.6**	0.5
Russian/East Europe	162	13.1	46	44	50	4.5	0.4
Asian	170	13.9	59	44	47	5.4	0.5
Other Spanish	165	11.1**	27	32**	38	3.5	0.4
Mexican	337	6.7**	7**	18**	13	0.7**	0.2
Puerto Rican	73	8.7**	5**	27**	20	2.2	0.8
Cuban	77	11.9	40	38**	30	3.3	0.8
Filipino	80	13.5	70*	40**	36	3.7	0.8
Caribbean	67	11.4**	34	34**	56	4.7	0.6

a. The value of b indicates the change in occupational status associated with a one-year change in educational attainment. The model regresses the occupational socioeconomic score upon years of schooling completed, age, marital status (a dichotomy distinguishing married-spouse-present men from all others), region (a dichotomy distinguishing those in the South) and ability to speak English (a dichotomy distinguishing those who speak English very well or well from those who speak it not well or not at all).

*Mean, proportion or coefficient is significantly larger than comparable parameter for the English ancestry group (.05 level).

**Mean, proportion or coefficient is significantly smaller than comparable parameter for the English ancestry group (.05 level).

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, November, 1979; Public Use File.

TABLE 2. Native-Born Sons 20 to 64 in 1979, of Foreign or Mixed Parentage: Educational and Occupational Characteristics and Occupational Returns for Educational Attainment

Ancestry	Characteristics of Groups			Regression Analysis		
					Returns for Education[a]	
	Sample Size	Mean Years of School	% With Some College	Mean Occupational Score	R^2	b	S.E. of b.
Total Sample	2,308	12.4	36%	42	33%	4.5	0.1
English	67	13.7	57	51	50	6.3	0.8
Scotch/Welsh	39	13.5	56	51	37	4.7	1.4
German	202	12.4**	36**	42	30	4.4	0.5
French	72	11.7**	25**	39**	22	3.4**	1.0
Irish	120	13.8	60	48	29	4.6	0.7
Scandinavian	120	12.4**	38**	37**	38	4.6	0.6
Other West Europe	90	12.5**	34**	43	27	4.4	0.8
Italian	415	12.0**	27**	43**	33	4.8	0.3
Other South Europe	75	12.3**	37	48	44	5.2	0.8
Polish	224	12.0**	27**	39**	43	4.9	0.5
Other East Europe	137	12.3**	31**	42	30	4.6	0.7
Russian	110	14.4	64	55	27	3.9	0.8
Lithuanian, Latvian and Ukranian	43	12.8	40	41	35	4.0	1.2
Asian	75	12.9	43	41**	35	6.6	1.1
Other Spanish	73	11.8**	37	38**	40	4.5	0.8
Mexican	158	9.8**	20**	31**	21	2.4**	0.4
Canadian	40	12.3**	33	42	48	6.7	1.5

a. The value of b indicates the change in occupational status associated with a one-year change in educational attainment. The model regresses the occupational socioeconomic score upon years of schooling completed, age, marital status (a dichotomy distinguishing married-spouse-present men from all others), region (a dichotomy distinguishing the South) and mother tongue (a dichomomy distinguishing those with English as a mother tongue from all others).

**Mean, proportion or coefficient is significantly smaller than comparable parameter for English (.05 level)

SOURCE: See Table 1.

TABLE 3. Native-Born Sons, 20 to 64 in 1979, of Native-Born Parents, Educational and Occupational Characteristics and Occupational Returns for Educational Attainment

Ancestry	Sample Size	Characteristics of Groups: Mean Years of School	Characteristics of Groups: % With Some College	Characteristics of Groups: Mean Occupational Score	Regression Analysis: R^2	Regression Analysis: Returns for Education[a] b	Regression Analysis: Returns for Education[a] S.E. of b.
Total Sample	29,805	12.7	41%	40	36%	5.0	<0.1
English	4,508	13.2	49	44	36	5.3	0.1
Scotch/Welsh	1,575	13.6*	56*	47*	35	5.2	0.2
German	6,073	12.9**	42**	41**	36	5.2	0.1
Dutch	647	12.7**	39**	40**	39	5.7	0.3
French	1,295	12.6**	38**	40**	37	5.0	0.2
Irish	3,019	12.8**	42**	41**	36	5.1	0.1
Scandinavian	1,406	13.3	47	42**	32	5.4	0.2
Other West Europeans	249	13.2	57	46	46	5.8	0.5
Italians	971	13.2	47	43	36	5.3	0.2
Other South Europeans	150	13.3	47	42	40	6.1	0.7
Polish	699	13.3	50	44	38	5.7	0.3
Other East Europeans	386	13.6	51	47	45	6.3*	0.4
Russian	295	15.0*	76*	59*	48	6.6*	0.4
Lithuanian, Latvian and Ukranian	80	14.2*	65*	48	44	5.5	0.8
Asian	98	14.6	66*	51	52	7.9*	0.8
Canadian	171	12.7**	42	39	39	5.0	0.5
American	1,846	11.3**	24**	32**	29	3.9**	0.2
American Indian	873	11.5**	24**	31**	20	3.5**	0.2
Other Spanish	223	11.8**	32**	33**	29	4.1	0.5
Mexican	365	11.5**	27**	32**	25	3.3**	0.3
Afro-American	1,665	11.5**	27**	29**	30	4.0**	0.2

a. The value of b indicates the change in occupational status associated with a one-year change in educational attainment. The model regresses the occupational socioeconomic score upon years of schooling completed, age, marital status (a dichotomy distinguishing married-spouse-present men from all others), region (a dichotomy distinguishing those in the South) and mother tongue (a dichotomy distinguishing those with English as a mother tongue from all others).

*Mean, proportion or coefficient is significantly larger than comparable parameter for the English ancestry group (.05 level).

**Mean, proportion or coefficient is significantly smaller than comparable parameter for the English ancestry group (.05 level).

SOURCE: See Table 1.

TABLE 4. Intergenerational Comparison of Occupational Returns to Educational Attainment, Men 20 to 64 in 1979 Classified by Ancestry

Ancestry	Occupational Returns for Educational Attainment			Rank Order		
	First	Second	Third+	First	Second	Third+
Other Northwest Europeans	5.6	4.4	5.8	1	8	4
Asian	5.4	6.6	7.9*	2	1	1
English	4.6	6.3	5.3	3	2	6
Russians/Other East Europeans	4.5	4.9	6.3*	4	4	2
British Isles, Not England (Primarily Irish)	4.4	4.6	5.2	5	6	8
German	4.1	4.4	5.3	6	9	7
Other Spanish	3.5	4.5	4.1	7	7	9
Italian	2.8	4.8	5.3	8	5	5
Other South Europeans	1.6**	5.2	6.1	9	3	3
Mexican	.7**	2.4**	3.3**	10	10	10